Reviewer's report

Title: Tuberculosis Associated with Mycobacterium tuberculosis Beijing and Non-Beijing Genotypes: A Clinical and Immunological Comparison

Version: 1 Date: 9 May 2006
Reviewer: Gunnar Aksel A Bjune

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a good paper about an important issue. The authors conclude that tuberculosis patients affected by Beijing strains of M.tb. have significantly lower frequency of fever, less pulmonary cavitation and a longer diagnostic delay; all indicators of a somewhat less severe disease than those affected by non-Beijing strains. As this conclusion is well documented and contradicts previous publications, it is worthy publishing. However, as noted in the text and as can be seen from figure 1, there is a wide range for these indicators among "Beijing patients". So, probably their most important finding is the wide variation? Beijing is already subdivided into "typical" and "atypical", and several authors have commented wide variation in virulence between different strains in animal models. May be this is just an indicator of the short evolutionary history of this "branch on the TB family tree"?

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
A word of caution should modify the conclusion: Beijing strains may not be more or less virulent than non-Beijing. They could just show more variation in virulence.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
None.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Regarding the cytokine data, I think it might be wise to acknowledge that there is a significant dynamic through the course of infection and clinical disease. So again the differences between Beijing and non-Beijing needs to be described in somewhat less "static" terms.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.